

*The Cairn
of Stars*

*Francis
Carlin*



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THE CAIRN OF STARS
AND
OTHER POEMS

By FRANCIS CARLIN
MY IRELAND. Poems, \$1.50

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THE CAIRN OF STARS

POEMS BY
FRANCIS CARLIN



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F. C.

The book that has its beginning here
is inscribed to the
National Guardian Angel of the Gael,
from Whose wings the Poets gather
unworldly Music;
by Whose sword each Generation
has been Knighted;
and Whose breath is on the ancient
fire of Faith.

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THE CAIRN OF STARS

THE CAIRN OF STARS

Among the hills that kneel around
A giant summit's ancient mound,
I stood, one night, below a cairn
Of stars on cloudy Mullaghairn.

And there, amazed, I saw a strange,
Pale Host descend the mountain range,
As the Years, like spectral Slingers, passed
The cairn on which Their stars were cast.

And as I wondered who, of all
Your Lovers, lay beneath the pall;
A Star of Hope fell on it, hurled
From heathery crags above the world.

Then suddenly, as come the streaks
Of dawn between two mountain peaks,
Another Year came up to fling
A Star of Freedom from His sling.

Then came the morning, Ireland;
But not before the fading hand
Of the pale Star-Slinger crowned the heap,
In a dream that would not let me sleep.

THE CAIRN OF STARS

At last the day came up to me;
But not before the alchemy
Of Fate had changed the Songs I threw,
As silver sparks, on the Lover, who,

For all these marvels, slumbered on.
O Ireland of the Dream of Dawn,
When I shall rest without a theme
In sleep that shall not let me dream,

May some young Singer, warm of word
Beside the Twilight's shallow Ford,
Cast silver stones on heedless clay
A thousand years from yesterday!

Nor is the wish too bold for one
Whose love was kindled at the sun;
For one whose fire shall yet be white
As embers on the hearth of Night.

But O! that I might claim a spark
From off that mound, built up to mark
Some long-forgotten Lover's bones—
A cairn of stars instead of stones.

WHOM SHOULD I MEET

Whom should I meet at the dawn, at the dawn,
Whom should I meet at the dawning,
But the King of the Wee Folk, and faith, he had on
The jewels that I would be pawning.

“Why do you think such a wish, such a wish;
Why do you wish for my wealth, boy?
With the stirabout waiting for you in a dish,
You are wealthy enough with your health, boy.”

Whom should I meet in the night, in the night,
And I with the dew of my sorrow,
But the Good People's harper who played with delight
On the harp I endeavored to borrow.

“Why do you ask such a boon, such a boon;
Why are you wishing to play, boy?
With a song for the morning, a whistle for noon,
And a dream for the rest of the day, boy!”

Whom shall I meet at the dawn, at the dawn,
Whom shall I meet in the morning?
Troth! silly am I, for the Fairies are gone
With the wisdom that I would be scorning.

THE CHANGELING

Would ye have me here for long,
 Little brother, little brother,
Would ye have me here at all
If ye were strong?
For a Fairy-Woman's song
 Sends me off to dreams of mother—
 Would ye save me, little brother?
Och! try.

Would ye take me from the liss,
 Little sister, little sister,
To our mother at the hob,
And out of this?
For the Fairy-Nurse's kiss
 Does be on me since I've missed her—
 Would ye take me, little sister?
Och! come.

'Tis yourself should know it, too,
 Heedless mother, heedless mother,
For I'm Eithne whom They stole
From Rosnacoo
When They left the changeling, who
 Doesn't look at all like brother—
 Would ye call me from Them, mother?
Och, do!

COW-TIME

Calling the dog, with a whistle,
To bring the cows to the stall,
I lopped the head off a thistle
And a star began to fall.

Whose was the hand to pluck it
From the other stars in the sky—
O surely He Who struck it
Was not as thoughtless as I!

A GIRL'S SONG

One night we sat, my love and I,
At the side of my father's hob,
While a cricket sang to his bosom-mate
Till her wings began to throb;
And my love, he told me the fiery tale
That made my light heart leap—
O if 'twere not for the dreamy Gael
Sure the world would go to sleep.

One day we walked, my love and I,
Through the fields of my father's land,
While a black-bird sang, to his bosom-mate,
What we both could understand;
And my love, he told me the flowery tale
That the mind of me shall keep—
O if 'twere not for the singing Gael
Sure the world would go to sleep.

One morn we stood, my love and I,
(And och! his tears were warm)
While a bee flew off without a mate
O'er the hedge of my father's farm;
And my love, he told me the parting tale
That left me here to weep—
O if 'twere not for the sorrowing Gael
Sure the world would go to sleep.

THE SPENDTHRIFT

I know a bright meadow and four bushy fences
With blossoms that hide in the dark of the haw;
But their fragrance and beauty are lost to the senses
Of one who is always away from Ardstraw.

And there, on a summit beside an old high-way,
Are two mossy towers I knew as a lad;
But the road and the ruins lie not upon my way,
For all the desires the heart of me had.

O Field, guinea-golden, your hedges of honey
Are far from my world and the labor thereof;
But while the rich bees have no business with money,
I'll squander my thoughts on the flowers I love.

And while the cold walls of that castle are standing
In which, as a boy, all my fancies began,
I'll squander my dreams on the mountain command-
ing
That view of Ardstraw I would see as a man.

THE BLACK SWANS

The swans of the sea,
 With their billowy breasts,
Would come to me
Were I to be
On the shores of Sligo
 At their rocky nests.

And swans would pass,
 With their bosoms black
As the wavy grass
Of the wet morass,
Were I in Sligo,
 On a turf-cart's track.

O swans that glide
 To your shores afar;
Wan dreams, beside
Your whiteness, ride
To the bogs of Sligo
 Where the black swans are.

WHITE FIRE ¹

(For the Duke of Abercorn)

White fire, my Lord, once warmed Your Grace's row
Of tumbled homes in which wool-tufted briers
Are growing, at the hearth-stones, where the fires
Were red in Ulster cabins long ago.

For once, the evicted chimney-winds, that blow
The embers of the stars in watery mires,
Blew o'er the wreck that housed my old grand-sires
And the ashes, deep in dust, began to glow.

The walls were thatched with twilight, but the clay
Of the weedy floor retained within the house
The traces of old cradle-marks, where I
Have heard, my Lord, the wings of crickets play;
The squeak of what is now a meadow-mouse,
And the croon of a rocking thorn-bough's lullaby.

MAC DIARMOD'S DAUGHTER

There is much to be said
For Mac Diarmod's young daughter,
And much to be sung
Were a poet about;
Since her eye is a mirror
Of Ulster's Blackwater,
When ripples shine over
The dark-dappled trout.

And much might be said
For his daughter's fair dower
Of heifers and bullocks
And meadowy grass;
But my head might be hanging
From Omagh gaol's tower,
For all the concern
That the heart of her has.

So I'll not spend a thought
On Mac Diarmod's young daughter,
But much might be sung
Of her land and her looks;
Since her fields are the fairest
Near Ulster's Blackwater,
And her eyes are dark-dappled
Like trout in the brooks.

THE NEWSMONGER ⁸

A simple man, who yet may be
Conspicuous in Eternity,
Came up the long *borheen* and he
Had a beggar's bag behind him.

Meal he had from Kilnabrock,
With the meal he had from Ballinlock,
And the meal he gathered in Derryknock
Was mixed with the meal from Carrick.

He was known afar and near, but "Jim"
Was the only name we had on him,
Or "Jimmy the Blind", for he was dim
By day and dark in the evening.

Talk he had from Cloontymore,
And gossip he had from Mullangore,
And the tales he had from Knockanore
Were mixed with the tales from Roosky.

"And would ye have a bowl of tea?"
Said the farmer's wife, "for I'm sure that ye
Are as dry as a traveller ought to be,
On the road that leads to nowhere."

THE CAIRN OF STARS

“Tea I had in Gortnagirn,
A turkey’s egg in Ballydurn,
And the butter I got from an Achill churn
Was laid on the bread from Mullagh;

So I’ve had my ’nough, good woman, dear;
But the longing is on me for to hear
The ways of the country, far and near,
In the news that is on the paper.”

“Well, a tinker died in Thomastown,
An eagle was shot in the County Down,
And a Waterford hound has taken renown
And the cup and all from the English.”

“Faith, the news is small enough to-day,”
Said Jimmy the Blind, as he shuffled away,
“And for all the editor had to say
He might as well be in Limbo.”

News he had of every birth,
And every wake or wedding of mirth,
And I’d give the guinea that I am worth
For a stick and a bag behind me.

THE TWO RIDDLES

“The Moon and Stars” and “Raking the Fire”

Here is a riddle, children,
I heard in Lurgybeg;
And the guessers, to-morrow morning,
Shall have the white hen's egg.

*Coming home for the supper,
I saw a table spread
With a cloth that was full of crumblings
And a broken bannock of bread.*

And here is another riddle
I heard in Killybegs;
And the guesser, to-morrow morning,
May choose from all of the eggs.

*Squatting upon my hunkers
Before I went to bed,
'Tis I who saw the Living
Being buried by the Dead.*

So here are the riddles, children,
I heard beyond the Strule;
And the guesser, to-morrow morning,
May carry an egg to school.

LÈSE MAJESTÉ

Here, the robins are all
As large as the rooks in Cooley,
And the daisies grow as tall
As the thistles in Gillygooly.

“Hush,” said my heart, “or chant
Of your native land; ’tis your duty.”
“Ah! but my wee thoughts want
The little things and their beauty.”

THE HOLIDAY

He died in his sleep, and he'll have his fill
Of Slumber before he can thank the men,
Who buried him yesterday over in Kill
At a quarter of ten.

Yet it might have been nearer eleven, when he
Was crossed by the spades in the Church's way;
Though the time did not matter to him, but we
Were free for the day.

THE TWO BROTHERS

*Who has heard
The Wind's grief,
For this dead bird
And this dead leaf?*

They seemed to be
Alike at first,
For in a tree
They both were nursed.

They seemed to be
Alike at last,
When from a tree
The twain were cast.

They seemed to be
Arrayed in red,
As from a tree
Each fluttered, dead.

*Who has heard
The Wind's grief,
For this dead bird
And this dead leaf!*

THE CALF-BOY

'Tis pleasant here to be herding calves
And they on the upland grasses,
For the beetle's tune is trailed across
The wind in the mountain passes;
And the crickets sing when the day is done,
As they do be singing nightly,
On hills that seem like the hearth of the sun
While the clouds are flaming brightly.

But I wish the heifers were brave and strong
And they in the valley's clover,
And I to be going off to the fields
With the tea and the crows and Rover;
For all the cows on the grass in the glen
Are out on their own resources,
And I would be listening once again
To the voices of men with horses.

THE MARKET TOWN

When I was ill in the long ago
That lately seems so nigh,
They placed a mirror before me so
I could see the passersby;
Market women and trading men,
Children and ballad-singers,
Farmers coming to town, and then
The noisy auction-ringers

With their "*Hark, ye! Hark ye!*
At twelve o'clock in Ballinaree—
Twenty acres of turbary land
To be sold at the fall of the hand."

Again I'm buried deep in bed,
But in this looking-glass
I see the folk who passed instead
Of those who now may pass;
Market women and trading men,
Children and auction-ringers,
Farmers coming to town, and then
The welcome ballad-singers

THE MARKET TOWN

With their "*Hark, ye! Hark, ye!*
The Blushing Rose of Ballinaree—
Twenty verses of a ballad made
For the best of the Dublin trade."

Maybe a moon in another sky
Shall be as a mirror so
It might reflect the world which I
Would still desire to know;
Market women and trading men,
Children and ballad-singers,
Farmers coming to town, and then
The rambling notice-ringers

With their "*Hark, ye! Hark, ye!*
At twelve o' the clock in Ballinaree—
A ploughing match with a guinea's prize
For the skill of your hands and eyes."

VIRGINS

It was after hearing the parish priest
On the Gospel of the Wedding Feast
In Cana, of the Wine and Water—
And I on the road with MacSorley's daughter—

That a snowy bud on a hawthorn bush,
Aware of the sun, began to flush;
While the sunny beauty of blushing water
Came over the cheeks of MacSorley's daughter.

THE BERRY-BLOSSOM

Agnes Lawlor walks alone,
And they say what she desires
Is as fair as the berry-blossom known
To be among the briers.

But when she comes to the Chapel-gate,
I'll have a word or two
With, "Agnes, girl, 'tis you'd be late
If I had walked with you."

And maybe she shall answer me
With the humor of the heart:
"If I were going to Mass with ye
'Tis early I would start."

Or maybe she might answer me
With the humor of the soul:
"And if I were coming from Mass with ye
The silence would be droll."

For the words of Agnes scarcely could
Be warmer than they are,
But the fear is on me that she would
Not travel with me far;

THE CAIRN OF STARS

Since Agnes Lawlor walks alone
On her Communion morns,
Bedecked with a Berry-Blossom known
To have been among the thorns.

THE SEVENTH SON

Old Tim has neither field nor farm;
But they do be saying he has a charm
Against the painful worms that gnaw
The nerves within an aching jaw.

And he showed me once a folded scrap
Of writing, hidden in his cap,
That clears the barn and dairy-shelf
Of rats, when chanted by himself.

And he also has another one,
From the seventh son of a seventh son,
By which he stops the living flood
Of animal and human blood.

So as I said, the heart of Tim
Has not a care at all for him;
While I would give my worth to find
A charm to change a woman's mind.

BALLAD OF HACKETTSTOWN

Among the times that cannot be
Recalled by any one,
The wisest man in Hackettstown
Had a semi-witted son.

And young Thomaus from boyhood grew
To a blind and silly man,
Being dark of sight and as small of wit
As when his life began.

One night, while sitting by the road
That climbs above Portlaw,
He felt the presence and the fear
Of a thing he never saw.

And suddenly, and suddenly,
He knew the sense of sight;
For the whitest thing in all the world
Is seen by all at night.

And suddenly, and suddenly,
His cloudy mind grew clear,
For many things were known to him
When he began to fear.

BALLAD OF HACKETTSTOWN

So coming to his father's hob
With knowledge in his eyes,
The wisest man in Hackettstown
Had a son who was as wise.

Next morning when the light was high
The father told Thomaus;
"I'd have you go and see the world
From here to Carroll's Cross."

And off he went along the fields
With the wonder in his mind,
But as he strode beneath the sun
He chanced to look behind.

"God save my soul!" he cried with fear,
As he saw his shadow there;
"Tis little I thought that Life and Death
Were such a friendly pair."

And coming home to his father's hob
With wisdom in his eyes,
The wisest man in Hackettstown
Was son to the man thought wise.

"O what have you seen?" the father cried.
"Tis surely Death I saw
This morning and but yester-night
On the road outside Portlaw."

THE CAIRN OF STARS

“For the whitest thing in all the world
Is Death abroad at night;
And the darkest thing in all the world
Is Death in the living light.”

“But how do you know these things at all?”
Said the father to the son.
“I know” said he, “that the shade of Death
And the shade of Life are one.”

And saying so, his mind and sight
Went daft and dark away;
According to the wisest man
In Hackettstown to-day.

LOUGH FANNY

Well remembered, by one who sees
Lough Fanny's pool in his memories,
Is the phantom moon that stumbled o'er
The ripples I shall see no more.

And now, that I recall the scene,
It seems to me there should have been
Some dubious stars left in and o'er
That lake, where I shall see no more

A well remembered moon, nor these
Small doubtful stars, the memories
Of which I left among and o'er
The reeds that I shall hear no more.

THE RUINED WONDER ²

I met himself above the hills
Where noisy waters flow,
From the stony mountain's busy rills
To the idle bogs below;
And he showed me where a Fairy Prince
Had built a palace, which
Has been a ruined wonder, since
His Lordship dug a ditch.

The talk he had lit up a face
Where memories strove to shine,
And he seemed to be as out of place
As a poet herding swine;
For the talk of him was on the things
And dreams that lie unknown
Between the fern of the Fairy Kings
And the rod of the Foreign Throne.

God rest himself, O'Doherty,
Who held the little crook
Of an April fern while telling me
Of Abercorn, the Duke;
And of Donnell Gorm, the Fairy Prince,
Who built a palace, which
Has been a ruined wonder, since
His Lordship dug a ditch.

A MUNSTER MARRIAGE

Going up to Cappyquin,
Going up to Cappy;
They who ride to Cappyquin
Forever shall be happy.
Well I mind the riding up
In a railway's crowded carriage,
The whiskey of the wedding cup
And the wishes on the marriage.

Riding up to Mellary,
Riding to the altar,
Riding up to Mellary,
Who is he would falter!
Well I mind the jaunting, far
Away from Cappy Station;
The bride upon the jaunting car
And the Canon's dispensation.

Going off from Cappyquin,
Going off from Cappy,
They who ride from Cappyquin
On honey-moons are happy;
Well I mind the hats they had,
Going off to Cork with laughter;
And my lonely cap, in Ballyvad,
On the salty morning after.

PEGEEN

I saw Pegeen,
 With her hair in a shower,
Dancing as light
 As the rain on a flower.

But the same Pegeen,
 In her habit last Monday,
Was lying as still
 As the snow on a Sunday.

LETTER-BLOCKS

He who plays with words
Can build them into Trees,
Where gay black-letter Birds
May warble as they please
In the leafy nooks
Of printed books,
And I am playing with these.

But I remember well
When letter-blocks, by me,
Were strangely made to spell
With their G and O and D;
And I'd give my rhymes
To be in the times
When I played with Poetry.

GOSLINGS

Goslings o' mine, ye have treasures untold
In the gold of your back;
So beware of the hawk that is supple and bold
In his airy attack.

And guinea-bright feathers, O goslings o' mine,
Now shine on your breast,
From which the grey weasel would suckle red wine
In his hedge-hidden nest.

O goslings o' mine, 'tis the young fox that schemes
At the streams and the weir,
While ye are as swans in my slumber—as dreams
With but fancies to fear.

THE BURIED BELL

Off I went from the towns of men
To the lonely waters of a little glen,
Where they do be saying the Penal People
Once hid a bell from their stolen steeple.

But whether the tale is true or not,
I know the hollow and the watery spot
Where the ripples dance to echoes ringing;
And this is the why that I am singing.

THE CORN-SPIRIT

Reapers, I never think of you toiling
Out in the broiling mid-day heat,
But what I think of the corn-crakes' troubles
On a grassy isle, in a sea of stubbles,
As you circle around to their last retreat.

Binders, I never think of you binding
Out in the blinding August sun,
But what I think of the young larks' troubles
On a grassy spot, in a field of stubbles,
Where they all remain while the corn-crakes run.

Nestlings, I never think of you lying
Out in the dying harvest grain,
But what I think of the Corn-Sprite's troubles
On the green of oats in the grey of stubbles,
While the bounds grow less, because of the Slain.

August, I never think of you shining
Above the whining of moon-mad hounds,
But what I think of that Spirit's troubles;
And She abroad in a place of stubbles,
As the Soul of the Dead, where the sheaves are
mounds.

ABOVE AND BELOW

The flying wild-ducks sing a sound
Like the noise of bees that hive in the ground;
While the bleat of the lofty snipe is like
The piteous cry of a goat in a dike.

And maybe the strains of the Angels are
Like the singing bells of Castlebar,
Where the tongues of roosting crows rehearse
A hullabaloo like a rhymers' curse.

THE TWIN ANGELS

Upon two little graves I know,
Two sun-beams fell as the golden snow
That tiny breezes drifted up
To fill a double butter-cup.

And on those simple mounds at night
These golden cups retain their light;
For yellow stars, from a single stem,
Look in the dew that shines on them.

But brighter than a flower or star
At these twin graves of children, are
Two watchful Angels, waiting for
The laugh of him, the smile of her.

Two lonely Angels, clad and curled
As Twins, now waiting in the world
To hear the higher Seraphim:
"Awaken her! Awaken him!"

AN IRISH MADONNA

As a mother, here in Western Donegal,
Ties quiltlets with a knowing cradle-knot
On a slumbering baby's feet, that he may not
Go wandering should the Banshee cry Her call;
Young Mary swathed the Infant in her shawl
And crooning psalms, she laid Him in His cot;
While twinklings of a chimney-spark begot
A dream of star-lit Angels in a stall.

The door-way flushed a stream of sunny joy
To the peasant Babe; but Mary, at the sill,
Beheld a form that faced her on a crest—
Two creels of turf that flanked a mounted boy
Who, riding on a donkey, crowned the hill
Like cross against the sun's enchanted West.

THE HOME SONG

A Poet sang from out the book
That I was reading, where
The woods were parted by a brook
That also sang an air.

And of the two old songs I heard,
I liked the brook's the best;
Until a finch began a third
Above his busy nest.

'Twas but to me the Poet sung,
While the brook sang to an Elf;
But the finch, I overheard among
The woods, sang to himself.

THE BLUE MOON

Memory is as blue
As the small flax-flower's dew,
The twilight's distant skies
And your far eyes:
Blue as the meadows seen
In reality as green;
Blue as the broad moon-light
That is really white.

Memory is as blue
As the world that relates to you,
From the heavens, over all,
To your blue shawl:
Blue as the roads that may
Once more be a dusty grey,
For one whose sight of mind
Is color-blind.

Memory is as blue
As the winds that sally through
The dark blue shadows, deep
In your blue sleep:
Blue as your lips, to be
That red reality,
Which I shall meet when the light
Of the moon is white.

THE KNIGHTS

Confirmed as soldiers of the Lord,
To-day in Ballingap,
Are they who wore the wooden sword,
The belt of rope, the harness strap,

And paper helmets, on their curls,
Which, playfully, they broke.
These are the soldiers, boys and girls,
Whom the Bishop knighted with a stroke.

IT IS WRITTEN

Here, Martyrs lie, whose Angels led them on
To the cloud they rolled from Ireland's Easter Dawn;

While Freedom wrote for Emmet's waiting grave:
"No Power may brand God's image as a slave!"

Behold his living cenotaph in flame
On hearth-stones of a Nation—there, his fame.

THE ORATOR ³

I sat within a vast Cathedral's walls,
Among the martial people of the Gael
Whose regiment, before the altar-rail,
Placed battle-standards torn by Rebel balls.
Grey men whose youth had known sad muster-calls
Sat rank by rank, and there, in marble mail,
St. Michael stood on guard before the Grail
With a sword of stone from Gothic arsenals.

And when, at last, the orator had won
My fancies from the bugle's silvery blare,
Still calling in a faint and lingering sound;
The Dead of old whose deeds were grandly done,
Were seen, with pike and battle-axe, to share
In the glory that a golden voice had crowned.

THE KITCHEN NOOK ⁹

These rosin candles on the shelves
Fling little spattering fires about,
Like stars that scintillate themselves
Until they sputter out.

And since they seem alive with light,
I'd rather see their twinkling breath
Than silent tallow-dips, so white
In their smoky dreams of death.

For every night when Darby lights
His black *duidin* within the nook,
He puts the talk on ghostly sights,
Till the children see a spook

In the air on which he blows a puff,
As though a spirit left his lips;
So the kitchen nook is queer enough
Without the tallow-dips.

THE TAILORS

A thorn-tree stands, in the hedge that runs
'Tween Hally's sheep and Gleeson's cows,
Without a flower for all the suns
That passed above its crooked boughs.

Yet the barren side of the ancient bush
Is white with tufts from woolly sheep,
While the leafy side conceals a thrush
Whose songs make dreams within my sleep.

And of them all, I like the best
The song about the Tailor-Elves
Who, having lined the thrush's nest,
Made woolen mantles for Themselves;

Against the times when Gleeson's corn
And Hally's hay shall fill the field
On either side of the hedge's thorn,
Wherein the thrush is still concealed.

Sure, his song agrees with what I saw;
But being old, I only mind
The tufts of wool upon the haw
And Winter's brier-broken wind.

THE HAY-MAKER'S LULLABY

(Behind a cock of hay)

The ribs of new moons
Are the rockers that hold
My cloud-covered lark,
And the cradle is rolled
By the foot of the Wind,
Shoo-ha-loo, Shoo-ha-loo,
By the foot of the Wind
As I croon you to sleep.

The ribs of the waves
Are the rockers that hold
My spray-covered gull,
And the cradle is rolled
By the touch of the Tide,
Hush-a-hoo, Hush-a-hoo,
By the touch of the Tide
As I sing you to sleep.

O the bent willow-boughs
Are the rockers that hold
My leaf-covered bird,
And the cradle is rolled
By the swing of the Tree,
Lu-la-loo, Lu-la-loo,
By the swing—let me see—
Why, the baby's asleep!

CRICKETS

The homely crickets, out of doors
With a sound for a song,
Are often heard on the kitchen floors
Of Doonnalong.

It is how they come to the hob and crook,
But like one who begs
Between a pair of crutches that look
Like a pair of legs.

And they as black as mortal sin;
But their songs are the prayers
They do be saying, when I latch them in
And go off, upstairs.

Masha, many crickets do often come
When the door is ajar;
But, thanks be to God, they are never dumb
As some beggars are.

THE CONVOY ⁴

*O Fairy Tree,
The Cavalcade,
That went with Ethna Carbery,
Has not returned to your gentle shade!*

Buds of the furze,
Were you not the golden plumes they wore
While thorns were tiny spurs?

Birds of the gorse,
Were you not the winged mounts that bore
Them off upon their course?

Winds in the whin,
Are you not as echoes waiting for
Their music to begin?

*O Fairy Tree,
The Cavalcade,
That went with Ethna Carbery,
Has not returned to your gentle shade!*

FOR A GOD-CHILD

(D. F. G.)

David Francis, boy of mine
By the right of laws Divine,
Every night before you nod
Please remember me to God.

David was the youth by whom
The Giant Gentile met his doom.
Harps he had, and verses, too;
He, who sang and danced like you.

Francis was an humble saint
Whom the artists love to paint,
Being beautifully pure;
He, the Patron of the Poor.

Naught of Francis can I claim
Save the honor of his name;
Naught of David came to me
Save the gift of minstrelsy.

So I ask you, boy of mine
By the right of laws Divine,
Every night before you nod
Please remember me to God.

THE LITHOGRAPH

“St. Francis Preaching to the Birds.”

*Whenever Fra Angelico
Began to make a tint,
He mixed his oil with Prayer; although
Lithographers can only show
His colors in a print.*

A lithograph, a poor affair
Made bright with inky paint,
Lights up old Moira's kitchen where
It minds her of a saint.

She bought it at a Mission stall
And having had it blest,
'Twas hung upon the chimney-wall
That holds a swallow's nest.

“Tis old St. Francis,” Moira said,
The other night to me;
“And the hoop of gold around his head
Is a sign of sanctity.”

THE CAIRN OF STARS

“But why they painted crows with him,
And left the Angels out,
Is more than I can tell, but Tim,
The sheep-boy knows, no doubt.”

“They do be saying his mind is weak—
That the Fairies left him loose—
But that he often tries to speak
To the birds is no excuse.”

“And I think he has the knowledge that
Is neither learned nor taught;
The gift of freely getting what
Is neither sold nor bought.”

“And faith, I’ll ask him just for fun,
Why the saint, so near the crows,
Should have a staff and not a gun;
For surely, Timmie knows.”

*Whenever Fra Angelico
Began to make a tint,
He mixed his oil with Prayer; and so,
Lithographers may only show
His colors in a print.”*

THE SHAMROCK

*Blessed be the shamrock's vine
That Nature wears to be a sign
And symbol of Her Cause Divine.*

Blessed be the Sire and He
Who died for us, and blessed be
The Love Who binds the Trinity.

Blessed be the Lord of All
Whose forest lies within the wall
O'er which the starry blossoms fall.

Blessed be the Royal Son
Whose thorn-tree shades His Father's dun
Though red with starry drops of sun.

Blessed be the Truth Who wrought
That star-shaped leaf—a Triune Thought
Which fell in woods where Patrick taught.

Blessed be the Flower and He
Of the Scarlet Dew, and blessed be
The Vine Who binds the Trinity.

*Blessed be the shamrock's vine
That Nature wears to be a sign
And symbol of Her Cause Divine.*

THE MASTER OF ST. ENDA'S

Cuchulain said from his chariot,
As he rode on his grave in the glen:
"I was a Child with children,
And I was a Man with men."

And Padraic Pearse might have uttered
'Tween his grave and the firing squad:
"I was a Youth with youngsters,
And I was a Man with God."

SONG OF THE SPALPEEN

(At the English Harvest)

There's naught in this world that shall keep me from
going

Back home to my darling in far Donegal;
For I'll have the will (when I'm done with the mow-
ing)

Of salmon that leap o'er the broad water-fall.

And O that the mowing were done, were done!

And O that the mowing were ended!

And I and the gold on my way, with the sun,
To the West where there's need for to spend it.

Yet, after the reaping, the Saxon potatie

May keep me awhile from my Heart and a Half;
But the ship will be supple that brings me to Katie
Who'll lift me clean out of myself with a laugh.

And O that the digging were done, were done!

And O that the digging were over!

And I to be going the way of the sun
To the West as a home-coming rover.

THE FOX-HUNT

In Ballyshunock House, before
Large weighty platters on a rack
With pewter mugs, a closet door
Had a picture dangling from a tack.

'Twas but a common-colored print
Of hunting men in jackets red;
Long yellow bugles, and the tint
Of bluish brightness over-head,

While a snarl was on the eager snout
Of every hound; and on my soul,
'Twas a sight to see the fox about
Three inches from a rocky hole!

For once, while standing mouth agape,
And thinking out the means whereby
He might have made a clean escape,
Old Bill the Half-Wit, coming nigh,

Cheered on the chase; and then, to me:
"I wonder if they caught him, boy!"
And though I am as old as he
Was then, I still retain the joy

THE FOX-HUNT

Of knowing; that dull-minded Bill
Was as much concerned about the fox,
As the man who had the heart and skill
To paint a hole among the rocks.

THE YELLOW STIRABOUT

A riddle I have, and what did I see?

A slave forbidden the light of the sun,
And she with a glossy quern at her knee
Grinding corn in a dun.

The burnished quern was her only light,
And the meal was scattered by whiffs of wind
In a dun as dark as it is to-night—
Why, children, you all are blind!

Now, the slave was Night and the mill, in the dark,
Was the moon from which the Stars blew out,
Like the sputtering flakes of meal that spark
From the yellow stirabout.

THE ELEMENTS

Fire, Water, Earth and Air,
Shall You not be Everywhere,
As You are even now with me,
When I am where I hope to be?

Fire-Beauty, shall You bless
My Purgatorial bitterness?
Water-Beauty, shall I look
Upon a Paradisic brook?

Beauty of the Earth, shall You
Be on the green neath Heaven's blue?
Beauty of the Air, shall I
Behold such winds as now blow by?

O Fire, Water, Air and Earth!
My hope assumes Your second Birth
Above, for Nature's beauties fail
To gratify the astounded Gael.

THE CONNACHT FACE

It makes me glad to see the Grace
Of God upon a Peasant's face;

But were my words what they might be
I would be gladder, being free

To act the Artist, putting down
Angelic sheen and Human frown,

So that some Poet might portray
The Almighty Moulder's softest clay;

Or that in poems he might draw
A Samson of the Ass's Jaw

With the quiet fires of a race
That smoulder on the Connacht face.

THE UPPER DOOR

“Open a half of the door,” said she
Who was ill and sorely so;
“Open the half of the door for me,
The upper half, that I may see
The crooked nest of the crow.”

“Open the half of the door,” she said,
“The upper half of the door;
And let ye lift me up on the bed
That I may see the over-head
Of the out-of-doors once more.”

“Let ye open the upper door,” she sighed,
And she with a distant stare;
And as the door was opened wide
To another world, the woman died
With a breeze, from wings, in her hair.

THE REAPER'S OCCUPATION RHYME

As I followed the reaper along,
While binding the corn on the way,
I was singing a modern song
That was made for a man in a play.
But the rhyme of the reaper was made
To the swing and the swish of the notes
From the clink of a reaping-hook's blade—
A music as old as the oats.

Sure, who could be binding the grain
As fast as it falls from the knife
Of a reaper who sings a refrain
That is set to the Music of Life?
A reaper, with modern men,
Whose pleasure is part of his wage—
O I'll never go binding again
With a song that was made for the stage.

FODDER

'Twas the night we sat up at the grating
That I heard it told by the fire,
While Larry and I were a-waiting
For the cow to calve in the byre.

And maybe I do not remember
The whole of the story, but I
Recall that each twinkling ember
Was as red as a bull's wicked eye.

"The night that is in it," said Larry,
And he with his heels on the hob,
"Reminds me that little things tarry
In the mind like a face in a fob."

"And I'm thinking" said he, "of the reaping
In the times when your father would get
The sheaf of the corn he'd be keeping
In the rafters away from the wet."

"And the first sheaf of oats— for the cow, Sir,
That was first for to calve in the stall—
Had the kernels all roasted; but now, Sir,
We are not superstitious at all."

THE CAIRN OF STARS

So at that we went out, never marking
That no fodder was warmed at the fire,
While the stars o'er the haggard were sparking
Like the eyes of a bull in a byre.

SUMS

When the Master said to little Jane,
“How many days does a week contain?”
She answered, “Seven.” But Christy, who,
Was figuring sums he could not do,

Put up his hand and caught the eye
Of the teacher. “Six,” was his reply.
Master Mulligan stroked his cheek:
“Seven days are in a week

And little Jane is right in this;
But let us hear you name them, Chris.”
“Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday—three;
Thursday, Friday and Saturday—see,

Said forward Christy, “six is right!”
And we laughed, we did, with all our might
Till the master rapped his desk with vim.
“How dare ye put the fun on him!”

Said he, and then; “But you forgot
To add in Sunday, did you not?”
And Chris replied, “Sure, I thought they were
All summed with the days of Heaven, Sir.”

THE CAIRN OF STARS

The Master pondered. "Tis what I think
Ye may all take out your pens and ink."
And walking up to the board, he set
The copy-line I remember yet:

*"Time is a part of Eternity;
Now that we Are, we must ever Be."*
But as for Christy, he never knew
That his thoughts were foolish enough to be true.

MODERNISM

My heavy word and a hard rhyme
On the foolish girls,
And they at the putting up of the curls
Before their courting time.

Och! but the world and the world's ways
Have tricks and to spare,
With the girls at the putting up of the hair
Before they are wearing stays.

My heavy word and a hard tongue
On the youth in their haste.
I would see the fluffy wind at the waist
Of a girl and she to be young.

THE SYMBOLISTS

I heard old Ned the Rhymer say:

“Since I’ve not been to college,
I’d give this Moon of mine away
In exchange for the Star of Knowledge.”

And so I added to his line:

(Which is a rhymer’s duty)
“’Tis I would give this Moon of mine
In exchange for the Star of Beauty.”

“Och, hold your tongues!” the bar-maid cried,
As we started off for Drimmin.

“Sure, men like ye should be satisfied
Since your wives are honest women.”

THE RAVELED EDGE

That which is in disorder,
Scattered upon the skies,
Forms the stellar border
Of methodical Paradise;

Whereon perhaps, hereafter,
At the edge of Eternity,
I shall listen to broken laughter
Being tired of harmony.

For that which is in disorder
Has neither rule nor rhyme,
Like the stars at Heaven's border
And the troubled laughter of Time.

THE HAGGARD POND

That distant beauty, out beyond
The reach of any dream of mine,
Is near enough to this haggard pond,
The dung-hill and the swine.

For after all, I need not take
A cock's step further on to see
That a strange clean sky is on this lake
Beside the piggery.

PLACE-NAMES

They tell me there are men who know
The names of places on the sky;
And that there is a map to show
The parts in which they lie.

But the only places, I can name
In the heavens, are the Moon and Sun;
For the many stars are all the same
On their purple hills, to one

Who knows each place-name on the way
From Ballyard to Killycloon;
Where Moor Lough is the sun, by day,
That pales into a moon.

THE SLIDE-CARS

We gathered the turf in the dusky bog
And, hauling it home on sliding cars,
We left the moor with its murky fog
And the mountain-side with its stars.

But it seems to me, as I sit and poke
The burning earth from that mountain fen,
That we brought the fog and the stars, as smoke
And sparks going back again

To a misty bog that holds the heat
Of a mountain stacked with burning stars.
Faith, it seems to me that we hauled both peat
And dreams on the sliding cars.

THE LAND-GRABBER

Grey-blooded Gaels there are
Whose blood was red—
The grey-blooded Ones who are lying as still
As the stones, on the side of a hill,
Above the dead.

Grey-blooded Gaels there are
Whose blood is cold—
The grey-blooded Ones who are living, and live
For that which their foe may give
Of land or gold.

O red-blooded Gaels, I heard
A wee girl say:
“*Ould Ford the Grabber left us, Sir,*
On the road,” and I’ve heard the purr
Of her kitten to-day.

NEWTOWNSTEWART CASTLE

“O the House of O'Neill is thatched with stars,”
Sang a road-side rhymmer on Castle Brae,
Where a castle stood before the wars
From which James ran away.

And while I heard the old man sing
That the house of O'Neill was thatched with light,
I gazed on the ruins where James, the King,
Found rest for a single night.

Where the King had slept with a coward's dream
In the towers he burned to their ancient ground
On the morning after, beside the stream
Of the Strule where his guns are found.

And gazing long on the ruins that
Were roofed with sparks when the walls were
flames,
I threw a coin in the singer's hat
And a curse at the Crown of James.

THE GOAT-FOOTED GENTRY

The Master says there lived in Greece
A queer goat-footed gentleman,
Who played the pipes and held a lease
Of all the woods as Mister Pan.

A Lord he was among his folk
And a poet of the Nature School,
Who saw the Highest in an oak
And Heaven in a moony pool.

And the other day when we had read
Two pleasant jingles that appear
In the Second Book, the Master said;
“The author, also, was a Peer.”

“Lord Byron was the name on him
And the gift of Song was on him, too;
And faith, he had a crooked limb
That wore a strange goat-footed shoe.”

“And children, dear, it surely seems
That when the God of Nature makes
A genius, to express His dreams
Abroad among the oaks and lakes;

THE CAIRN OF STARS

He always leaves a token of
His justice. Did ye ever mark
That the nearest song to God's Above
Is in the common-colored lark?"

And so he talked and talked away;
But I do be thinking now, as then,
That he might have had much more to say
About the queer goat-footed men.

WHITE WALLS

She will close the under and the upper door;
For the turf is dying on the kitchen floor
And the rush-light goes, from the growing dark
Of the room, as a ghostly spark.

She will part the curtains of the poster-bed
And going to sleep, with something said
Concerning Death, there shall be no
Grey fear where she shall go.

For when this worn old woman shall rake
The ashy fire for to-morrow's sake,
She will go away from this wall, lime-lit,
And the shadow that stirs on it.

MOTTOES

When the Master wrote across my slate
The letters shaped like copper-plate,
I used to try with an honest will
To imitate his hand and skill.

Though after a while, I came to see
That the thoughts he wrote meant more to me
Than the beautiful script that ran like vines
Above the ruins in awkward lines.

But to follow the perfect form of what
He wrote was a little task to that
Of trying to live according to all
The mottoes he set on slate and wall.

So, choosing the easier task, I made
An effort to write with the Master's aid;
But the years were on me before I heard
That Christ had hardly written a word.

THE QUEEN OF KERRY ⁵

When vanity vexes
The sense of the eye,
The girls from the mountains
Come into their own;
And 'tis you
Had the meekness
So blue
In your eye
That my thoughts of you, *cailin*,
Have builded a throne
For the Queen of the Kingdom of Kerry.

When flattery angers
The sense of the ear,
The rhymers of Erinn
Shall lose their renown;
And though
You seem heedless
I know
You would hear,
So my thoughts of you, *cailin*,
Have tinkered a crown
For the Queen of the Kingdom of Kerry.

THE CAIRN OF STARS

O the past, I am certain,
Has lingered in Gort
Since I left you beyond
The wide, numerous waves;
But I've wrought
At your jewels
And thought
Of your court
Till my thoughts of you, *cailin*,
Are vassals and slaves
To the Queen of the Kingdom of Kerry.

THE COMING OF THE FAIRIES

Young Oweny sat with his kilted legs
In front of my foreign cloth,
And we had finished the brown hen's eggs
That were boiled by his sister Cauth.

A rustling fire was on the floor
Neath a chimney built on a tree,
And the brown hen stood on a half o' the door
Blinking at Oweny and me.

Over the empty bowl and cup
We had our talk, and soon
The boy picked all the egg-shells up
And stabbed them with a spoon.

'Twas such a strong determined stroke
That the hen flew off, amazed.
"Why did you break the shells you broke?"
Said I, while Oweny gazed

At me as though I should have known;
And I in my foreign cloth,
The colored kilts on the legs of Owen
And a laugh on the mouth of Cauth.

THE CAIRN OF STARS

“And didn’t your mother tell you, Sir,
To smash the shells? That’s queer!
Sure, ’tis I who thought that the Wee Folk were
In the States as well as here.”

“You see, They came to Ireland
A shocking long time ago,
In the shells of eggs, you understand,
And each one had to row

His own wee boat across the whole
Deep world, the people say;
So, in every shell, we smash a hole
In the fear They might sail away.”

And here am I with the memory
Of the egg-shells—each a half—
That were almost wrecked in the mind of me,
By echoes blown from a laugh.

THE TWO NESTS

The wonder was on me in Curraghmacall,
When I was as tall as the height of your knee,
That the wren should be building a hole in the wall
Instead of a nest in a tree.

And I still do be thinking it strange, when I pass
A pasture that has to be evenly ploughed,
That the lark should be building a hole in the grass
Instead of a nest in a cloud.

THE MUSTER

And do you not as free men stand
On Irish land now all but free;
Or do you wait at a Triumph-Gate
Erected to Liberty?

Then you should know the Time is here;
For the distant cheer grows loud at last,
As the Dublin Men march back again
With a Nation's mustered Past.

"Shoulder Arms" and "Forward, March"—
And under the Arch Triumphal, stride
Great Spirits set on foot and yet
Their Generals well might ride!

Bugles cry with mellow throats
And the mystical notes of muffled strings,
Soaring free to Victory
Make echoes between Her wings.

Over Them all is Victory's wing,
And the Victors bring both pike and sword,
With a banner green and gold, between
The flags of the Yellow Ford.

THE MUSTER

Over Them all—the Tribes of Erne,
The Munster Kern, the Connaght Men
And Leinster's Clanns; for each dead Man's
Dim Shadow moves again.

Over Them all—the Hero-Hordes
And Chieftain-Lords who onward stride
As Spirits set on foot, and yet
The Chaplains well might ride.

For, rising up from out the graves
Of unfettered Slaves and Chiefs and Kings,
The Host comes on to that streak of dawn
Now warming Victory's wings.

Rory Oge comes proudly forth,
And O'Neill of the North, in Italy,
Has called his Men from Aileach's glen
At the Soul-Shout of the Free.

While young O'Donnell, long in Spain,
And haughty Shane of the glances fierce
Come down the Wind, with the Shadow-Kind
Led on by Padraic Pearse.

Hail! Leader of the lingering Dead
Who strangely tread this living world!
We shout to You as Free Men who
Uphold what You unfurled,

THE CAIRN OF STARS

In Ireland of the Waiting Years,
Where the distant cheers grow loud at last,
As the Dublin Men march back again
With a Nation's mustered Past.

THE CHIMNEY-STAR

The greyest things in my mother's house
Are grandfather's beard, and a careful mouse
That comes from behind the kitchen door
For the crumbs my kitten forgets on the floor.

And the brightest things in the kitchen are
A tuppenny light, and a timid star
That hides away until I sit
Beneath the chimney to look at it.

Yet what I like the best of all
Are the pewter platters against the wall;
For mother has promised the plates to me
When I am the woman I hope to be.

But the chimney-star was promised to Jim.
"Just wait till you're married," said she to him;
And he at the fire where mother has cried
Down tears a-plenty since Jimmie died.

O I wish that grandfather's beard were blue
And the mouse were gayly colored, too;
And I wish that the woman I'll be were big
Enough to be dancing my wedding jig!

THE CAIRN OF STARS

For there do be times when the tuppenny light
And the star we have are not as bright,
As when Jimmie and I would watch the door
And the crumbs our kitten forgot on the floor.

THE BLIND HEN

A blind hen walked through the open door
From the earth of a haggard wild with worms,
But she seemed to know that the earthen floor
Had nothing that crawls nor squirms.

For she neither pecked nor scratched the clay
Of the kitchen's ground, where Pegg McGirr
Has fed her by hand since the dreadful day
That a brown hawk swooped on her.

"Faith, the tale concerning the tempered wind
And the naked sheep, is as true as true,"
Said I to Pegg, "for this hen, now blind,
Is helped by the Lord through you."

"Well, it may be so at that," said she—
And a thought grew bright in the eye of Pegg—
"But as for myself, I do always be
Concerned with the blind hen's egg."

THE QUEEN

God forbid
That the dignity,
Of the greatness hid
In Humility,
Should ever be seen
As a shade of Pride
Cast by that Queen
Of Grace I spied,
On a mountain tall
Near Westport Town,
Clad in a shawl
And a shoddy gown!

MULLING THE BEER

He sits in the Pub as a thinker
Of flowery thoughts, that control
The yellowish flame of the clinker
And the bluish coal.

For the fancies in him have the power
To change every flicker and spark,
To the bud of the gorse and the flower
Of the flax in the dark:

And though they all come at the mulling
Of his beer, as a matter of course,
They never relate to flax-pulling,
Nor to cutting of gorse.

THE MIMICKER

A fool, when I asked him, muttered
The remembered sounds he took
From the talk of a brook that stuttered,
And the lisp of a mountain pool
Near Tullywisker's cloud.
"It is wishing they were," said he.

Then, having recalled the whispers
Of stars beyond the brook,
And the murmurs of Tullywisker's
Deep watery stars; the fool,
As he mimicked them, laughed aloud.
"It is courting they were," said he.

BALLYSHUNOCK ¹⁰

Jolly Ballyshunock

Where the heart is always sunny;
Jolly Ballyshunock
Where the bees are brewing honey;
Sure, I wouldn't be without ye
If I couldn't dream about ye,
For I'd wake me up
And take me up
Your old *borheen* once more.

Hearty Ballyshunock

With your welcome for the *shulers*;
Hearty Ballyshunock
With your dairy full of coolers;
Sure, I wouldn't be without ye
If I couldn't think about ye,
For I still recall
The fire and all
The boots around the coals.

Laughing Ballyshunock

With the smiling morning-glories;
Laughing Ballyshunock
With the merry evening stories;

THE CAIRN OF STARS

Sure, I wouldn't be without ye
If I couldn't laugh about ye,
 For each simple, sad
 Occurrence had
A humorous surprise.

Happy Ballyshunock
 Where the thrushes sang to tease me;
Happy Ballyshunock
 Where the swallows tried to please me;
Sure, I wouldn't be without ye
If I couldn't sing about ye,
 For the swallows that
 Can only chat
Remain in chimney tops.

Distant Ballyshunock
 Where the hounds are dreaming of me;
Distant Ballyshunock
 Where my soul once sang above me;
Sure, I wouldn't be without ye
If I couldn't dream about ye,
 For I'd wake me up
 And take me up
Your old *borheen* once more.

TIPSY THOUGHTS

O shadowy Mountains!

So far am I off from the hills
And their fountains,
I do not know whether
Your purple lies down in their rills,
Or aloft on your heather.

O meadowy Island!

So far am I off from the low
And the high land,
I cannot tell whether
Your heath-cocks arise for to crow
In the clumps, or the heather.

O dream-drunken Present!

So far am I off o'er the brine
With the Peasant,
I do not know whether
This purple is bright-beaded wine,
Or dew of the heather.

THE SPOOK

The most horrible sight I ever saw
Was the soul of a scare-crow, gaunt and queer,
Made of Humor, the Shadow of straw
And a foolish notion of Fear.

THE RIVALS

Low-flying swallows seem to swim
Along the waters, that they skim,
Endeavoring to pass beyond
Their swimming shadows in the pond.

And thus go I, as I have gone,
Along the Way of Life, whereon
The Body struggles with the Soul
To be the first to reach the Goal;

As water-swallows seem to race
Their shadows to an unknown place,
Till comes the dusk that cannot give
The light by which their rivals live.

O that the Soul and Body may
Continue for to race their way,
Until the shades of Death descend
To part the rivals at the end!

But as the stars run o'er the night,
(When all the swallows cease their flight)
And sparkles, swimming in the pond,
Take up the race with lights beyond;

THE CAIRN OF STARS

So may my spirit, shadowed by
Her Angel, race across the sky,
Endeavoring by pinioned brawn
To be the first to fade in Dawn.

APRIL AND JULY

In with April and out with July:
Thus do the cuckoos of Monaghan fly.
In with the shadows and out with the sun,
And I would that my passage were paid for and done.

In with Sorrow and out with Joy:
Thus flew the cuckoos when I was a boy.
In with the short days, out with the long,
And I would that a singer could follow his song.

In with showers and out with the hay:
Thus shall we come and soon flutter away
From the Wraith of the Old World—the cuckoo
and I—
Where “Welcome” is sad with its shadow “Goodbye.”

OFF TO THE MASS

Off to the Mass at Kilkevin,
I heard on my way through the wood
A lark singing echoes to Heaven
And a wren crooning low to her brood;
A green plover sung in the beeches,
A robin cheeped hymns of his own,
And a stone-chatter preached, as he preaches
Each day from his pulpit of stone.

And kneeling me down at Kilkevin
With the people assembled in prayer,
There was much of the Parish of Heaven
In the fancies that came to me there;
For the white Sabbath morn holds a beauty
Unique for the spirits of men,
But each day of the week and its duty
Is the same to the lark and the wren.

WESTPORT IN MAYO

Of all the quiet little towns—
 (O Westport I am singing)
Of all the quiet little towns
 That listen to the sea,
I'd rather go to Westport Town
 And the steeple bell, once ringing
The music of the Angelus
 Unheard before by me.

'Twas Saturday and I was there—
 (O Westport I am yearning)
'Twas Saturday and I was there
 As a pilgrim to the Reek;
When suddenly a music burst
 O'er every lane and turning,
And when I heard the Angelus
 I knew my faith was weak.

For out upon the village streets—
 (O Westport I am lonely)
For out upon the village streets
 And in the market place,
The men began to bless themselves
 And stood uncovered only
While welcoming the Angelus:
 "Hail, Mary full of Grace."

THE CAIRN OF STARS

So of all the quiet little towns—
 (O Westport I am singing)
Of all the quiet little towns
 That listen to the sea,
I'd rather go to Westport Town
 Where first I heard the ringing
Of the ancient Christian Angelus,
 Now bells of Memory.

THE COLD COURTSHIP ¹¹

The Wind came in from the lane to warm
Her shivering Self at the fire,
As I, alone on a kitchen *form*,
Was thinking of my Desire.

I know the saying of Billy the Blind:
"It has always been reported
That only the pigs can see the Wind."
But never a day he courted.

And I know the talk of Jim o' the Sprees:
"Only the pigs and only
The old grey pigs can see a breeze."
But sure, he was never lonely.

So I fear the people of this town-land
Know little at all of learning,
For at the hob I saw Her stand
While the shivering flames were burning.

But I gave Her room on the stool and She,
Who had chilled the kitchen fire,
Had the long loose hair that blew on me
In the absence of my Desire.

THE TWO MICE

Into the glow of my lighted rush
 Came a kitchen-mouse, that ran beneath
A besom made from the silvery brush
 Of birches and ashen heath.

And 'tis what I saw but moony rays
 On birch and heather that hid a small
Grey meadow-mouse—till I turned my gaze
 From a besom against a wall.

THE GREY PLUME

The long heron feather,
O'Dogherty wore,
Still sweeps o'er the heather
But not as before;
And well may the heron
Take pride in his plume,
With the head of O'Dogherty
Red in the tomb.

The valleys are spurning
Gay flowers, beneath
The purple of mourning
Aloft on the heath;
And well may the sorrow
Of Nature be shown,
Though the heron is happy
In wild Innishowen.

Bright was the bonnet
That guided his men,
But the grey feather on it
Fell red in the glen;
And well may the Saxon
Take pride in its fall,
While birds wear their plumage
Above Donegal.

THE CAIRN OF STARS

Ochone, that the feather
O'Dogherty wore
Should sweep o'er the heather,
But not as before!
Och! Och! that the heron
Should fly with grey plume
O'er Cahir O'Dogherty
Red in his tomb.

THE ARGUMENT

Between the dusty road to Kill
And a grey mud-mason wall,
A couple lived on Harney's Hill
When I was small.

Kind they were in deed and word
And as peaceful as the next,
Until they heard the singing bird
That made them vexed.

"The little robineen," said she,
"Is early in his bush."
"Sure, woman, dear o' dear," said he,
"It is a thrush."

'Twas then the woman started that
Which lasted for a long
Warm while of arguing, as to what
Bird piped the song.

Four seasons passed away, and then
Said he, "Dear woman, dear,
Do you recall that we heard the wren
This day last year?"

THE CAIRN OF STARS

“You mean the willy-wag-tail,” said
The wrathful farmer’s wife,
And the old discussion that was dead
Came back to life.

So on that day in every Spring,
The arguing couple’s words
Renew the case to which they bring
Their different birds.

And I think I’ll go to Harney’s Hill
With the music of my flute,
To settle what is surely still
A strong dispute.

For I could end the long discourse,
By imitating all
The birds that sang among the gorse
When I was small.

'TIS A PITY ⁶

The Hillock is lonely to-night in the fog
With Una away on the Waterford side;
For O'Hely's Banshee is abroad in the bog
With a cry for his clan.

Since Death has been always the cause of her woe,
The white Fairy Woman mourns strangely to-night;
For O'Hely is childless and with him shall go
The red blood of his race.

'Tis a pity the man has a case that requires
The presence of Una to publish his grief;
For O'Hely's banshee is abroad, and the Cryer's
Sole cry is "Ochone."

THE FERNS

Fire o' the Turf,
You had little to do
When you withered the ferns
In the frost on the pane;
For dead are the flowers,
Once yellow like you,
That warmed the lane.

Grey are the vines
In the snow on the sill,
Like the sea-wrack that lies
In the Winter-white surf;
And the lights of the whins
Have burnt out on the hill,
O Fire o' the Turf!

LOOKING FORWARD

'Tis few would know the Ballyvad,
If the bridge of Ross
Were metal-made;
And 'tis few would know the Ballyvad,
If Carroll's Cross
Were a place of trade.

But the river known as the Ballyvad,
Neath a bridge of steel
May yet flow by;
And Carroll's Cross on the Ballyvad
May yet appeal
To the merchant's eye.

For the boy, now gone from the Ballyvad,
Had the youthful knack
Of making streams
Turn wheels of straw on the Ballyvad;
And he may come back
To complete his dreams.

THE CONVENT'S CALL

Hearts lie hidden because they hold
The gems of Love and Love's red gold;
But the heart I found was a useless thing—
All treasure-trove belongs to the King.

THE LONELY WOMAN'S ACRE

The straining limbs of the horses pull
The smooth plow
And my grassy field, that was beautiful,
Is broken now.

Yet after awhile, the beasts shall drag
A harrow where
The seed of corn shall be sown from a bag;
But what shall scare

The rooks away from my young shoots green?
For the ugliness
Of a scare-crow's form was never seen
In a woman's dress.

Sure, 'twas neighborly of the men to plow
My bit of ground;
But a pair of trousers and a hat, somehow,
Must yet be found.

THE CUCKOO-CLOCK

Said an ancient man who is wasting away
In the cotter's cabin, next door;
"I heard the cuckoo the other day
As I never heard him before."

"Why surely you did," said his neighbor who
Had her mind on the clock she bought;
"For Memory sweetened the call with Her two
Soft notes of Time and Thought."

THE POOR MAN

With an inexpensive jennet,
And a creel upon a cart,
And a cabin where a linnet
Often sings to break his heart;
It may sound a trifle funny,
But the truth I here declare:
Faith, 'tis not for want of money
That I'm not a millionaire.

All the silver in my pocket,
When I'm coming from the town,
Couldn't buy a copper locket
For to match a muslin gown;
But I've heard of golden coffers
Stated in a marriage plan,
So 'tis not for want of offers
That I'm not a wealthy man.

There's a party near the village
Who would make a likely match
For, with land too good for tillage,
Any woman is a catch;
But the matches and their makers
Can go off to other scenes,
Since 'tis not for lack of acres
That I'm not a man of means.

THE CAIRN OF STARS

For the gold in Wicklow's ditches
And the land of Louth, to me,
Would be only empty riches
Wanting Nora MacNamee;
But that rose is full of honey
Which a neighbor's bride shall wear,
So 'tis not for want of money
That I'm not a millionaire.

THE BIRD-CATCHERS

When Sheamus, a lump of a lad like me,
Said, "Let us be off to Ballinabwee,
With the light of a lantern, to cage the birds
That sleep in the hedges," I blest his words.

And off we went with a kerchief tied
O'er the lantern's flame, until we spied
Fitzgerald's hedge, then, turning in
From the road, we loosened the kerchief pin.

Down and up and down the ditch,
We flashed the sudden light in which
The birds awakened, and they as blind
As owls in the sun, or bats in the wind.

And so, before the black-birds knew
What was on them at all, we captured two,
With a yorlin bright as the yellow flame
Incaged by the lantern's iron frame.

But coming home from Ballinabwee,
What did the both of us hear and see
That left us cold and afraid to stir,
But a woman shrieking with the fright on her!

THE CAIRN OF STARS

And for long the folk in the parish said
That Ballinawee was a place to dread,
Because of the fires that, some allege,
Are fluttering still at Fitzgerald's hedge.

But Sheamus and I grew up the years
With the secret in us, though it now appears
That the age is on him, and from what I hear
He thinks, himself, that the place is queer.

JOY TO YOU

Joy to you and gladness,
And that your soul may be
As far away from sadness
As the Star was from the sea,
When the Sheep-Boy, the Sheep-Boy,
Heard Heaven's melody.

Smiles to you and laughter,
And also that you may
Be merry the morning after
On good St. Stephen's Day,
When the Wren-Boy, the Wren-Boy,
Shall sing his roundalay.

Joy to you and gladness,
And that the mid-night bell
May ring away the sadness
From the stricken Old Year's knell,
When the Chimes-Boy, the Chimes-Boy,
Strikes "Welcome" and "Farewell".

THE COLLIE

The goats, that graze with the cattle, keep
In the company of the cows and sheep
 At the coming home to the field and fold—
At the coming on of the sleep.

And as for the dog and I, 'twould seem
We chum as two with a single scheme
 At the coming home to the kitchen hearth—
At the coming on of the dream.

For here am I at the fire-side now
With a fancy on me, wondering how
 Old Shep can sleep, while barking away
At the wandering heels of a cow.

THE HERDSMAN'S SON

One day I wished when the wind was blowing,
To go away with the flighty men
Who know not where they might be going,
And come, like Columbus, home again.

And all at once, the fingering zephyrs
Made harps and lyres of the windy air
Between the horns of the cows and heifers—
And all at once I was Otherwhere.

For I've been off in an alien Distance
Where Foreign Folk were thumbing strains
Of Fairy charms; but, with resistance,
I was sent, like Columbus, home in chains.

THE AWAKENING

The Mind awoke, and gazing out
 She whispered through Her lattice-bars;
“Is the darkness of the night about,
Or is the day abroad?” No doubt
 She can always see the stars.

O GIRL UNKNOWN

O Girl unknown, that face of yours
So beautifully sweet, endures
The search-light of admiring eyes,
To their surprise!

For to myself I said of you:
"If such is seen in eyes of blue,
Their soul must hide a beauty such
As naught might touch."

But eyes of mine have had their fill
Of your frail beauteousness, and still
Your Woman failed to realize
My Man's surprise.

SHEP

I knew old Shep a month or so
Before I liked the dog, although
He liked me fully in his way
When first we met; and Shep, to-day,
Would know me in a crowd of men
And cattle were I all of ten
Broad fields away from him. Yet he,
The symbol of Fidelity,
Is a friend that cannot realize
He knows me only with his eyes.

THE LONG BEARD

Scarcely a road at all it was—

The little way that ran
To the home of Danny Keane who wore
What most becomes a man;
And scarcely a face you could see at all
Through the beard of Galway Dan.

Out in a cattle fair he stood
And he with a homely cow;
But the man, who wanted to buy the beast,
By all the powers did vow
That though she were not good at the pail,
She might be yoked to a plow.

Over the bargain both were stiff,
But at last the sale was struck;
And the beast was sold for eleven pounds
With half a crown for luck,
While Galway Dan, with a satisfied air,
At his beard began to pluck.

Then happened the strangest thing at all—
A wonderful thing and weird—
For the sound of a swarm of bees was heard

THE CAIRN OF STARS

And faith, they soon appeared
O'er the bulky form of Galway Dan
And settled in his beard.

With a laughing shout the busy fair
Was soon in a hub-a-bub;
But someone shook the beard above
An empty butter tub,
And the half a crown, paid down for luck,
Was spent at the nearest Pub.

O luck may come in many ways
And it goes on wings galore;
But the luckiest thing in Ireland,
Since the honied days of yore,
Is a swarm of bees, for it brings the luck
That lasts forevermore.

'Twas scarcely a road at all that went
To the home of Galway Dan;
But now the way is wide enough
For the carriage of a Khan,
And many a face in Galway wears
What most becomes a man.

THE BEGGAR'S BLESSING ⁷

God bless us all, Ma'am, bad and good!
God bless us, as He said He would,
And may He wither the bramble-wood
For every Munster fire.

With stick in hand for ram or dog,
I've wandered over *baun* and bog
And passed the crowded Cross, begog,
To sit before your fire.

Sure, the robineens, with flaming breasts
And feathered hearts in cosy nests,
Are not so warm as he who rests
And sings beside your fire;

Nor are the larks that occupy
The cloudy nooks within the sky,
So happy-hearted, Ma'am, as I
While dreaming at your fire.

Though in a camp that brightly glowed,
I left the tinkers on the road,
Where song was free and porter flowed,
To drowse beside your fire;

THE CAIRN OF STARS

Because the youth, that kept me gay,
Is gone from my four bones to-day,
And the tinkers have a quarrelsome way
Of sitting at the fire.

Ah! woman, dear, of all the lanes
That lead to farmers' green domains,
I'd sooner take the one that gains,
For me, this welcome fire,

That burns in what has proved to be
A house of hospitality,
And I shall sing, where it pleases me,
Of Ballyshunock's fire.

God bless us all, Ma'am, bad and good!
God bless us, as He said He would,
And may He wither bramble-wood
For every Irish fire.

BLOWING THE FIRE

At the fire-wheel, in the chimney nook,
I have blown the coals beneath the crook,
While roaming all the world around
On a sailing ship in a story book.

The coals were burning, as they ever burn
On the Munster floors, and every turn
Of the hearth-machine brought forth the sound
Of screws a-whirling at a steamer's stern.

And the noisy fancy I heard in Kill,
While blowing the fire, was with me till
I heard the loud reality
While sailing off from a lingering hill.

O surely a score of years is long
Enough away from the pot-hook's prong,
For one who sees the Queenstown Quay
From a sailing ship in a quiet song.

THE FORTUNE-SEEKERS

Leaning over the steamer's rail
And the leaping foam below,
I saw that the sheen of spray was dyed
And shaped like a bright rain-bow.

And wondering who might find the bow's
Gold band that veined the sea,
An emigrant ship was seen in the wake
Of the West-bound Argosy

That sailed the sky—the while it bore
Sealed orders stamped by Fate—
With Hope commanding the Sun-lit Ship
And Fortune, the Captain's mate.

BALLAD OF THE BUTTER

Young Phelim stood at the Friars' Gate
And asked for the old Lord Abbot;
Since he would be an humble monk
In Augustine's holy habit.

"Now what do you know of the inside world
To cause this step uncertain,
And what have you done in the outside world
O'er which you would draw a curtain?"

"I know full well that your inside world
Is Augustine's Holy City,
And all I did in the outside world
Was done in rhyme or ditty."

"Now if that be so," the Prior said,
"You must leave the World your lyre;
For a song profane would ill become
The lips of a holy friar."

"And would you take that gift away
Which the Lord to me has given,
And would you take from me that gift
Which I hope to bring to Heaven?"

THE CAIRN OF STARS

“That power I might not take from you
Which the Lord placed in King David,
But your soul is more than a Gaelic gift
To the One Who freely gave it.”

“Yet I shall make you a novice, though
You seem a doubting Thomas,
And as to the fate of your rhyming art
I shall ask no binding promise.”

Young Phelim lived as a novice there
And remained as a lowly brother,
For though he was in the inside World
His thoughts were out in the other.

Now it chanced one day that Phelim begged
From many a farmer's dairy
Small butter-pats, the taste of which
In the best of farms will vary.

Off to the Drogheda fair he went,
With the gathering, for to sell it;
And the buyer's auger a sample bore
From the tub that he might smell it.

But a part was the color of pallid cream
And a part of it was yellow,

BALLAD OF THE BUTTER

And a part was the color of saffron straw
And part of it was mellow.

Home to his convent Phelim came
With the tub that the fair rejected,
And for many a day the bread was spread
With the butter that he collected.

And many a day, from that strange tub,
The Prior's bread was buttered;
Nor was he heard to complain at all,
For a thanks to God he muttered,

Until, one noon, his toes were seen
To twitch within their sandals;
And what was left in the butter-tub,
Was moulded into candles.

"Now, Brother Phelim," the Prior said,
"I bid you make some verses
In as strong a form as you know how
With calm sarcastic curses."

"In as strong a form as you know how,
And let him read who chooses."
So Brother Phelim went off to sit
Among the heathen Muses.

THE CAIRN OF STARS

And when his mirthful task was done
It was read to the monks at supper,
And sent abroad to the farmers' wives
From Lower Louth to Upper.

That night the satire-maker's sleep
Was troubled, as he lay turning
In dreams, while an angel skimmed the cream
Off his soul for the final churning.

While the good Old Prior of Louth was heard,
In his slumber-talk, to mutter
A blessing on all rich Gaelic rhyme
And a curse on the County's butter.

Och! sorry am I that women burned
The verse that was freely given
By the begging poet, for it is now
But known to Phelim in Heaven.

THE MOON-GLADE

By Envagh's Lake, where ripples whispered
To Silence seen as nocturnal silver,
I walked as one who would tread the waters
A moon had marked with a path-way straight
And dustlessly white. The ribbony end
Of the way was lost in distant darkness,
From which it ran to my eager feet;
And as I rounded the circled flood,
The path, that ended before me, moved
With the onward steps of one who saw
The Grace of God, as a moon-glade, shining
In Nature's Soul. Then came the wind
That shadowed the ripples sparkling there,
And the silvern path was suddenly broken
To faded ruins, before dimmed eyes
That beheld, with awe, the effects of Evil.

By Envagh's Lake I wandered, lonely,
On a beach that margined a mystery,
As one who would walk abroad on waters
Like erring Peter, or the sinless petral
That bears his name.

Seen, but unfelt,
Like mirrored fire, the moon's white flame
Went off to cloisters veiled with cloud;

THE CAIRN OF STARS

And a rain of reflected stars began
To strike the darkness with sudden sparks.

By Envagh's Lake I gazed upon
The contrite Soul of Nature, She
Whose beauty whispered from silent waters
To one who walked in darkness other
Than that in which the moon-glade moved.

THE FROZEN BROOK

As when, from skies where frozen splendors gleam,
The chilled moon's breath, as white as Winter's dew,
Is borne by trembling winds between the two
Grey margins of a ripple-moving stream,
Till, slowly (as a poet's twilight-theme
Grows out of grey and passes into blue)
The ashen water, shadowed with the hue
Of sappirine, becomes a glossy dream:

So Time bears on the Winter of our years
To Memory's brook, which, color-cold and still,
Takes on a frosted sky with stars bedimmed.
When old, we but remember what appears
As a dreamy distance iced upon the rill
O'er which a Summer's swallow-thoughts had
skimmed.

WHEN ALONE

When, alone, I hear the breezes
Whistling reels and rounded jigs,
'Tis myself remembers something,
Something more than dancing twigs.

For I met her at the cross-roads,
And I asked her with a glance,
While the leaves were taking partners
With their shadows for a dance.

So we jigged it with the shadows
And we danced it with the leaves,
Till the wrens were housed in hedges
And the swallows sought their eaves.

Then, with feet that were as supple
As the fiddler's nimble hand,
She went off, while laughing glances
Which I failed to understand,

Till I heard a rustling laughter
Hushed with kisses in a bough—
Och! 'twas then I minded something
That should be a memory now.

THE VIRGIN KISS

That I may sing "Farewell"
To Nature, when I hear
The sky, within a moon-like shell,
Murmuring at my ear.

That I may say "Good-bye"
To Erinn, with the breath
About to be anointed by
The virgin kiss of Death.

And O that I may take
My whispering leave of You,
America, as I awake
To find my dreams come true!



NOTES



NOTES

¹ White Fire. In Killydart, a town-land in the domain of the Duke of Abercorn.

² The Ruined Wonder. A Fairy palace, in the same domain, on Bessy Bell Mountain, Tyrone.

³ The Orator. Rev. Matthew C. Gleeson, U. S. N., in St. Patrick's Cathedral on the 50th. anniversary of the departure of the 69th Regiment for the Civil War, April 23, 1861.

⁴ Ethna Carbery. The Irish poet, Anna Johnston MacManus, who "closed her eyes on Ireland of her heart's love", April 12, 1902.

⁵ *Cailin*. i. e. a girl.

⁶ The Hillock. Knockshigowna i. e. *Cnoc-Sidhe-Eabhna*, the hill of Una's fairy palace near Ballingarry in Tipperary. Una was the guardian spirit of certain Munster clans.

⁷ baun. i. e. *badhun*, an enclosure or a field for cattle.

⁸ borheen. i. e. *bohereen*, a little road.

⁹ *duidin*. a smoking-pipe with a short stem.

¹⁰ borheen. i. e. *bohereen*, a little road.

shuler. i. e. *suibhloir*, a traveller.

¹¹ form. i. e. *forma*, a bench or seat.

The book that has its ending here was put together for the glory of God, and the honor of Ireland; and it is I, Francis Carlin, who put an end to the finishing of it on the feast-day of Mobhi who was of Glasnevin.

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